

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2018

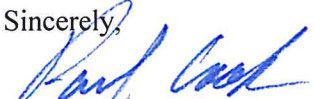
Vice President Mike R. Pence
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20501

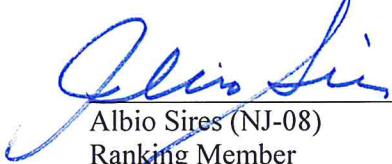
Dear Vice President Pence:

As you prepare to attend the Eighth Summit of the Americas in Lima, Peru, we write to affirm bipartisan Congressional support for stronger U.S. engagement in the Western Hemisphere and respectfully request that you raise the following national and regional issues in your conversations with our democratic partners in the region:

- Venezuela – The humanitarian and economic crisis in Venezuela, caused by the Maduro regime, is untenable for the Venezuelan people and threatens the stability of the Hemisphere. Over three million refugees are displaced, infectious diseases are spreading, and an increase of narco-trafficking continue to fuel the crisis. As such, we ask that you exhort the region to denounce the illegitimate snap May election and to implement targeted sanctions and visa bans against Venezuelan regime officials and their families. We also urge you to prioritize developing a coordinated regional humanitarian response plan to provide for Venezuelan refugees (visas, food, vaccinations) and get much-needed aid into Venezuela. We further urge you to request that countries call on the Venezuelan regime's enablers (Cuba, China, Iran, and Russia) to cease their interference in Venezuela. Finally, we urge you to work with countries to implement a joint withdrawal of their ambassadors from Caracas until we see a truly democratic government in power.
- Transparency and Anti-Corruption – Widespread government corruption, weak public institutions, and a lack of transparency have led to declining public trust in democratic systems. We believe that a key U.S. priority is to advocate for clear, concrete results from the Summit on accountability and transparency to safeguard democratic principles. We ask that you use this opportunity to urge countries to provide more political and financial support to build up the capacity and independence of their Attorneys General to tackle corruption and impunity and achieve judicial results.
- Regional Security Threats – The activities of Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) and terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah, the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps, and ISIS within the Hemisphere threaten our goals for greater regional stability and prosperity. We urge you to call on countries to create the legal framework and judicial capacity to more effectively sanction TCOs and terrorist organizations in coordination with U.S. efforts and to increase multilateral cooperation efforts to cut off licit and illicit funding streams that support TCOs and terrorist organizations operating in the region.
- U.S. Investment in the Region – Many U.S. businesses want to invest in Latin America and the Caribbean but find challenging environments from organized crime, corruption, and inconsistent application of country laws. We encourage you to urge countries to make the U.S. their business partner of choice instead of China and thus do more to improve the investment climate so the region can achieve greater prosperity.

Sincerely,


Col. Paul Cook, Ret. (CA-08)
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Western
Hemisphere
Committee on Foreign Affairs


Albio Sires (NJ-08)
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Western
Hemisphere
Committee on Foreign Affairs


Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL-27)
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Middle
East and North Africa
Committee on Foreign Affairs